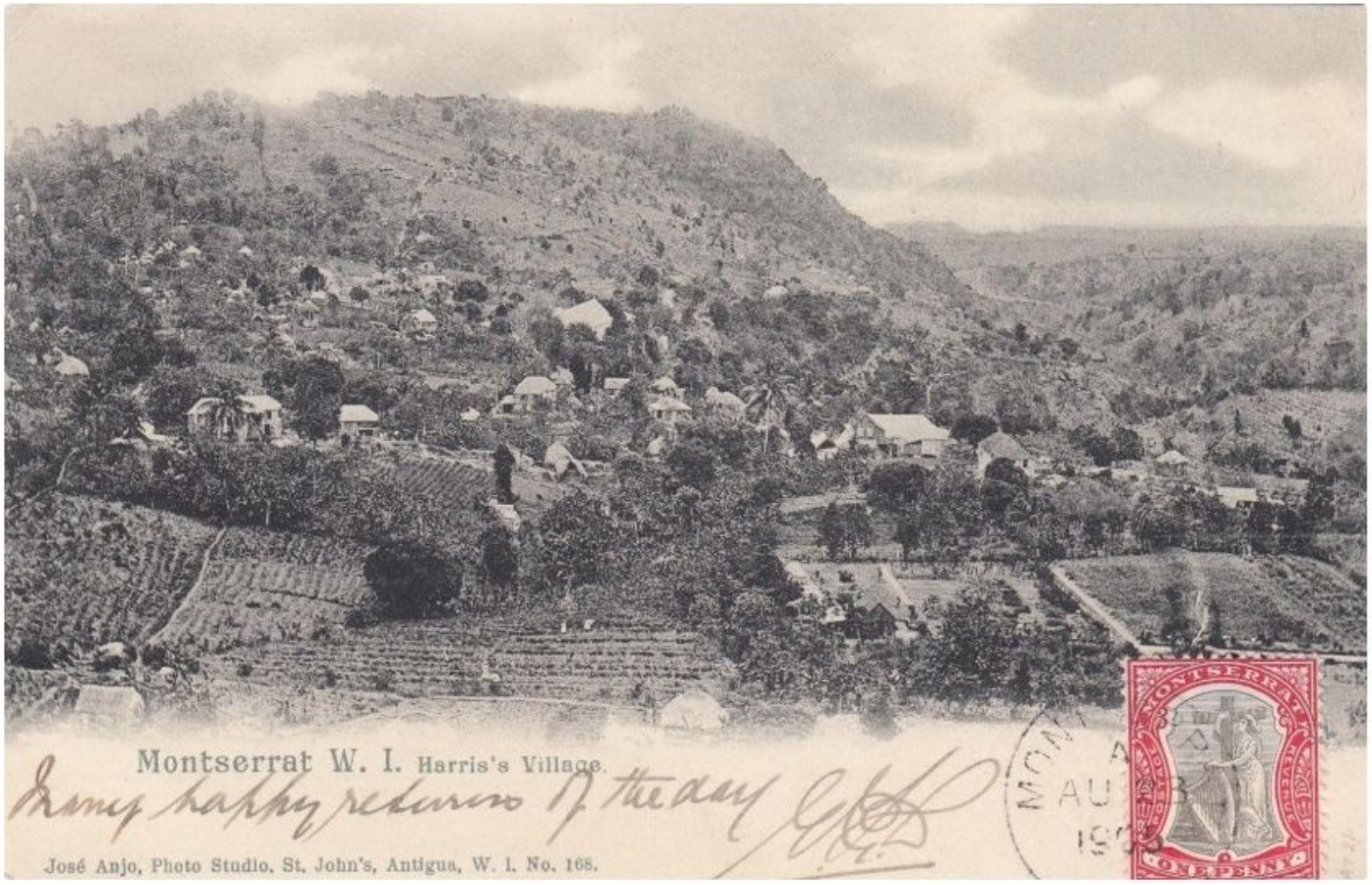
A History of Harris, Montserrat: from plantation to village early days



About 1905

A hand coloured version

Harris Village, like many villages on Montserrat, is named after the plantation or estate (itself often named after its owner, sometimes an early one, occasionally a later one) on whose former lands the recently emancipated inhabitants began to build their own community as free persons.

The earliest Harrises in the record are a Peter Harris, recorded in the 1678 census [1] as being in Lieutenant Cormack's division, and a Thomas Harris in Major Gallwaye's division (the divisions being geographically-based units of the island defence militia). From the names of his neighbours (eg Westopher and Missett) in the census and the recording of women and children alongside, it is likely Peter Harris who is associated with the plantation. A Nathaniel Harris is in the records at the Montserrat National Trust as a witness to a will in 1684. [2] Nathaniel Harris and Nathaniel Harris junior are recorded in the militia in 1696.[3]

The plantation seems originally to have been owned by the infamous [4] Governor Roger Osbourne who in 1662 had given "by Patent" land adjacent up "Smoaky Hill path" to John Brown and Dominick Bodkin which was later acquired by a Thomas Molen. By 1711 Nathaniel Harris (perhaps the same as above, perhaps his son) owned Osbourne's land here [5] (Osbourne had owned much more on the island). The acreage is not recorded.

The 1729 census [6] records Harris with 80 acres and the following family, slaves and property.

Names.	Trade.	Houses.	Wind Mills.	Cattle Mills.	Men.	Women.	Bigg Boys or Children under 15.	Bigg Girls or Children under 14.	Little Boys or Children under 9.	Little Girls or Children under 8.	White Men Servants.	Negro Men.	Negro Women.	Negro Boys under 14.	Negro Girls under 12.	Number in Family.	Lands—Cultivated Acres.	Lands—Uncultivated Acres.	Sugar Acres.	Indigo Acres.	Horses.
Nathaniel Harris	Planter	2	...	1	1	2	1	1	...	3	...	11	11	5	3	5	60	20	40	...	8

In the same census Nathaniel Harris junior owns 7 acres in the parish St Georges

In 1729 Harris sold to Dominick Trant for £150 (perhaps £250,000 today) a third share of 250 acres "one mile" in length from Bryans Gutt (? now Pelican Ghaut) in the north to Sharps River (? Farm River) and Tuites Gutt in the south, with the sea to the east.[7] This is obviously a different estate (what became Trants) and it seems that Harris sold out his ⅓ share, acquired perhaps by marriage. The only estate large enough in St George parish in the census apart from "Farrill's" is recorded as Nathaniel Irish's 250 acres. Trant was buying up other shares and smaller lots in the area, and is recorded as a "Councillor at Law" in the census, owning 350 acres and 230 slaves - confusingly listed in St Anthony parish, which must have been his Plymouth abode.

In 1755 a Nathaniel Harris buys 10 acres adjacent to his own land, and a further 3½ adjacent at "Smoky Hill" the following year. [8]

In his will of 1760, [9] proved in 1761, Nathaniel Harris, now of St Christopher (St Kitts), names daughters Elizabeth and Catherine as under 21 years of age, sister Ann Iles wife of William Iles, and his sister Elizabeth. His estate is in the hands of his executors, including his brother Abraham, the will expressly excluding his son Nathaniel from inheriting the plantation although provision for his maintenance was made.

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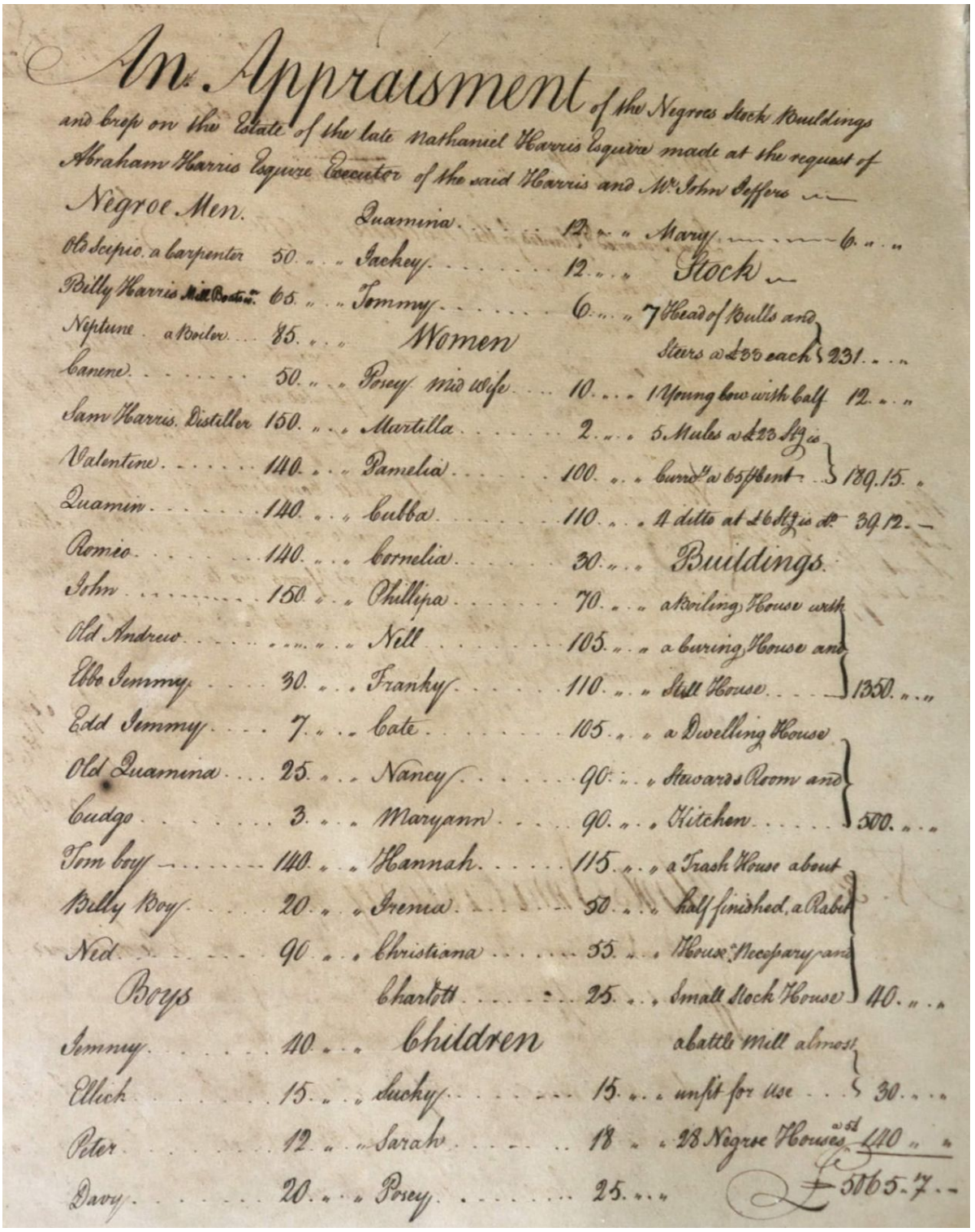
[1] Caribbeana Vol 2 p 317
[2] ROD_MNI_1789_015 1787 - 1792 [Transcriptions of Deeds 1734-1739] - an official copy of a copy
(n.b. All footnotes ROD or REGDEEDS refer to image names of digital records at Montserrat National Trust)
[3] The British Plantations Association Oath Rolls 1696 p.66
[4] See for example this account of one episode in his governorship
[5] ROD_MNI_1789_090/091 1787 - 1792 [Transcriptions of Deeds 1734-1739] - *ditto*
[6] Caribbeana Vol 4 p308
[7] ROD_MNI_1789_023 1787 - 1792 [Transcriptions of Deeds 1734-1739] - *ditto*
[8] ROD_MNI_1755-57_0057 &_0019 1755 - 1757
[9] ROD_MNI_1762_441 1762

Abraham Harris, presumably running his brother's plantation as executor, purchased many slaves; in 1772 twenty-nine (named [10]) from Samuel Frith "now of Great Britain" for £1,945; in 1773 from John Jeffers fifty (named [11]) for £3,500. That year Harris "now of Dominica", as executor of Nathaniel Harris, leased to John Jeffers, "carpenter", Harris plantation, now of 140 acres, and the 43 enslaved persons there, for seven years at £500 sterling per annum.[12]



An Appraisment of the Negroes Stock Buildings and Crop on the Estate of the late Nathaniel Harris Esquire made at the request of Abraham Harris Esquire Executor of the said Harris and Mr John Jeffers

Negroe Men.							
Old Scipio a Carpenter	50	Quamina	12	Mary	6		
Billy Harris	65	Jackey	12	Stock			
Neptune a Boiler	85	Tommy	6	7 Head of Bulls and Steers @ £33 each	231		
Canene	50	Women					
Sam Harris Distiller	150	Posey mid Wife	10	1 Young Cow with Calf	12		
Valentine	140	Martilla	2	5 Mules @ £23 5/ is	180	15	
Quamin	140	Pamelia	100	Cann[e] @ 65 pr Cent			
Romeo	140	Cubba	110	4 ditto at £6 6/ is	39	12	
John	150	Cornelia	30	Buildings			
Old Andrew		Phillipa	70	a Sterling House with			
Ebo Semmy	30	Nell	105	a Curing House and			
Edd Semmy	7	Franky	110	Still House	1350		
Old Quamina	25	Cate	105	a Dwelling House			
Cudgo	3	Nancy	90	Stewards Room and			
Tom boy	140	Maryann	90	Kitchen	500		
Billy Boy	20	Hannah	115	a Trash House about			
Ned	90	Irena	50	half finished, a Rabit			
Boys		Christiana	55	House Necopary and			
Jemmy	10	Charlott	25	Small Stock House	40		
Ellick	15	Children		a Cattle Mill almost			
Peter	12	Lucky	15	unfit for use	30		
Davy	20	Sarah	18	28 Negroe Houses @ £4	140		
		Posey	25		£5065	7	

Note that Sam Harris, *"Distiller"* is appraised at £150, Posey, *"mid wife"* at £10.

"Rabit House" suggests an attempt to breed rabbits for meat.

A *"Necessary"* was the common term for an out-house lavatory.

Image courtesy of the Montserrat National Trust

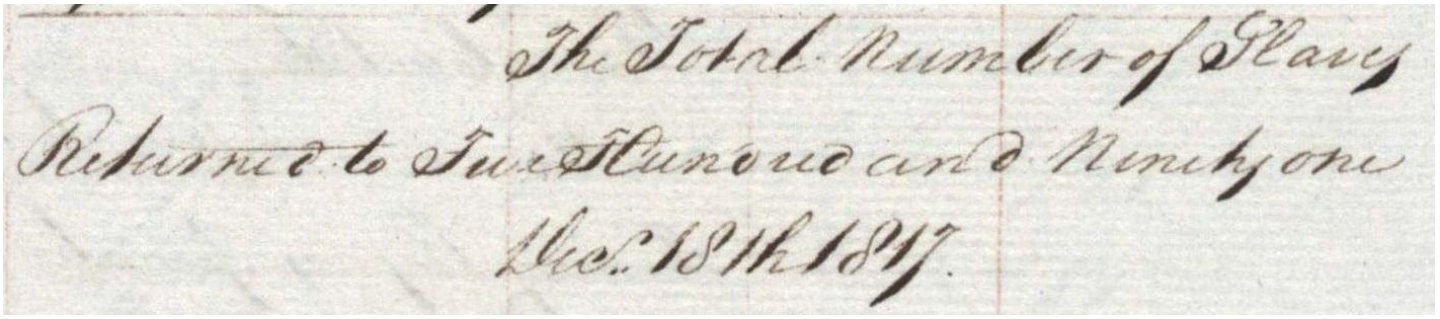
[10] ROD_MNI_1772_014 1772
[11] ROD_MNI_1774-76_027 1774-1776
[12] ROD_MNI_1774-76_067 1774-1776

A comparison with the names of the enslaved bought in 1772-3 above shows that few if any went to Harris plantation. Most likely Abraham Harris exported them to a new plantation in Dominica, which had recently been taken from the French (eventually permanently in 1805) and whose great areas of unclaimed and uncultivated land was opened up to British planters to exploit.

In 1774 Harris asked the Governor Sir Ralph Payne to pause the granting of probate for his step-daughter's personal estate in Montserrat to Ellis Iles, brother in law to Ann Iles (sister of Nathaniel Harris senior deceased). [13]Abraham Harris' wife Ann (formerly the widow of William Harcum) had died in 1770 leaving him with 2 "infant" sons Samuel and Abraham - perhaps prompting his relocation to Dominica. He claimed the will was a fake, its contents leaving his boys their half-sister's estate of "forty valuable slaves" and £1,500 sterling on reaching 21 years of age, but to Iles' family should they die before then. Harris claimed she died intestate, which presumably meant the estate would pass immediately to his sons, under his control. The outcome is not in the record.

Nathaniel Harris somehow, despite his father's attempts in his will described above to disinherit him, had come into possession of Harris plantation (though it could by now have been a next generation Nathaniel); for in 1782 he put the estate up as security to Thomas & Rowland Hunt, merchants of London, [14] against a debt of £5,135, giving him 10 years to repay at a steep interest rate of 8% per annum.[15] The plantation is recorded as 162 acres (perhaps an exaggeration, perhaps better measured) with 33 named enslaved persons there. The attempt to hold onto ownership soon failed, however, for by 1785 Queely Shiell [16] was the owner (there is no record of the transaction), leasing the plantation, together with 116 named slaves (who were probably not all attached to Harris plantation), to Thomas Lee Pond for 21 years at £700 sterling per annum.

There is no mention of Harris plantation in the records of compensation paid to West indian slave-owners after abolition for their loss of "property" [17]; presumably Shiell's 650-odd slaves were only nominally attached to any particular plantation. The 634 on the Slave Register in 1831 are just recorded in one long list, as are the 591 recorded in 1817.


The Total Number of Slaves
Returned to Twelve Hundred and Ninety one
Dec. 18th 1817.

[13] ROD_MNI_1772_236 1772
[14] The Hunts had plantation & trading connections in Dominica, and probably knew Abraham Harris. See here and here
[15] ROD_MNI_1782-83_037 1782-1783
[16] ROD_1785-86_100 1785-1786 Queely Shiell at Abolition in 1834 was the largest slave-owner on Montserrat.
[17] See Legacies of British Slave-ownership

Extract from 1830s map of Montserrat - courtesy of John Carter Brown Library at Brown University [18]
The "T" by the estate (and others) is indicated on the map as an estate "long since out of cultivation"

In 1835 Shiell, via his attorney, son William, sold 2 acres of land on the plantation to the Anglican Bishop of Barbados, The Windwards and The Leewards to build the parish church of St George. The next year in the same manner he sold 1 acre to the Methodists to build a chapel and Sunday school nearby.[19] Each sale netted Shiell £20 sterling; these transactions were not charitable.

On Queely Shiell's death in 1847, aged 93 and long resident in Great Britain, his son William inherited Harris plantation. But it, along with many other plantations on the island, was encumbered by a British Government loan granted after the catastrophic 1843 earthquake (centred at neighbouring Guadeloupe) to aid rebuilding;

ESTIMATED LOSS and INJURY sustained by the late EARTHQUAKE, as per Report received by a joint Committee appointed by the two Houses of Legislature.

Estates and buildings thereon . .	£13,000 sterling.
Houses in town	6,800
Public buildings	2,700
Roads	500
Sterling	£23,000

[18] Map online here
[19] In the 1839 Blue Book the Sunday school was recorded with 165 scholars. No record of Methodist baptisms at Harris.

though the President's Report for 1848 makes it clear that not only was little or nothing forthcoming from the Shiells, the largest beneficiaries of loans, in terms of interest payment or loan repayment, but also that the loans were not used for the repair and rebuilding for which they were intended. He concluded :-

> I am of opinion that the loan, instead of having been a benefit, has been injurious to the general interests of the island. Of the whole amount of 20,000*l.* divided amongst 52 claimants, 15,000*l.* were actually lent to five individuals only; yet the entire revenue of the country is answerable under the Act for the defaults made by these individuals, one of whom has not up to this moment paid a single sixpence of the interest due by him, though a borrower of nearly 6000*l.*, and another who received a sum little short of 5000*l.* has paid the interest due for one year only, though the time fixed for the payment of that for the third year is near at hand.

The Shiell plantations were bankrupt, and Harris plantation as well as several others William Shiell owned by inheritance or purchase by mortgage were auctioned off by court order in July and August 1850. [20]

Harris estate was purchased by John Rawlins Semper, a local barrister. (He also acquired Shiell's 250 acre Balham estate just north of Cork Hill, Montserrat, and jointly with Thomas Greer, his Bethel and Tuitts estates.) He paid just £27 local currency, (which fluctuated against sterling, but about £20) but with £600 sterling Government Loan debt on the property. Strangely, in the 1856 Colonial Report, Harris estate is recorded as 300 acres, bought from the Loan Commissioners in 1855 by the same JR Semper for £100, now free of Loan debt.

His motive is unclear; Montserrat, in common with the British West Indies in particular and Britain and the British Empire generally, was in a severe economic depression. Perhaps he, and a few others who embarked on a similar path, most of whom were not part of the traditional plantocracy, saw wider property ownership as a way to motivate the population and stimulate the local economy; more likely, in this case, it was Semper reclaiming some family prestige vis-à-vis the Shiells - the Sempers (John Rawlins' direct relationship is unclear) had been almost as large land- and slave-holders in Montserrat as the Shiells. William Shiell had married Dudley Semper's daughter Mary but did not engage with the family [21]; he had acquired, almost certainly on credit, several Semper plantations on Dudley's death, they being mortgaged and unprofitable.

He did not immediately start selling small plots of land; only Edwin Donald Baynes, son of the President Edward Dacres Baynes, soon acquired an acre from him. Baynes was Colonial Secretary and Registrar, and was himself buying encumbered estates at auction, including some of Shiell's; in 1853 he began selling small lots on Lady Cole's 300 acre estate that he had bought. Semper started selling plots seriously in 1855, probably to help service the loan debt; [22] Joseph Fergus "the younger" bought, for £50 10s local currency, 4 acres known as Garden Hill Piece, bounded north and west by Farrells estate. Over the next five years he sold about 40 acres in lots of 1 to 2 acres, mostly to trustees on behalf of the occupiers.[23] Also sold was the old yard and works of the estate, with about 8 acres of land. These sales are summarised in the table below.

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[20] See summary in this link here

[21] See an account of the non-relationship in Dudley Semper's will of 1834 (also MNT image ROD_MNI_1832-39_100)

[22] All transactions are searchable in Register of Deeds summary here , showing original document page reference
Note that in the original documents, the children are often named; space precludes their inclusion here.

[23] This legal device, normally used with large value purchases and transfers, became a very common practice in 19th century Montserrat - the main benefit was security as the beneficiary could not have "their" home and land taken by creditors, but nor could they sell without trustee consent; occasionally it was a wife's name only with husband explicitly excluded. Mostly the trust deed specified that the property was to be inherited by the children as "tenants in common" after the death of the parents, meaning each child owned an equal independent share, presumably resulting often in many dwellings being built close to each other with family ties between the occupants. It is interesting to note that there appear to be few records of re-registering of properties by trustees handing title to the children of the original beneficiaries on their parents' decease. Perhaps smaller proprietors felt that possession was ten-tenths of the law; a recipe for future disputes.

Date	Acres	Price	Beneficiaries & Neighbours	Trustees (if any)
11/02/1856	1	£13 10s	In trust for Polly Farrell, husband George & children. By Paradise gut, High road & Farrills estate	William Chambers yngr & Augustus Sweeny
16/02/1856	1	£13 10s	In trust for William Burns, wife Matilda & children. South of Bugby Hole river	James Meade & Thomas Greer
08/03/1856	1	£13 10s	In trust for James Chambers, wife Maria & any children, and children of JC by deceased wife Elizabeth. By Farm estate & Pasture Piece	James Meade & Charles Anstruther Chambers
15/03/1856	1	£13 10s	In trust for Lydia Harper, wife of William Harper & her natural children. Part of Pasture piece	Nathaniel James Hill & James Meade
21/03/1856	2	£36	In trust for Charles Farrell, wife Elizabeth & children. By Joseph Fergus, Joseph Meade & the high road.	William Chambers yngr & Christopher Skerrett
21/03/1856	2	£36	In trust for Joseph Syres Meade, & children by Henrietta Shoy, & niece Bridget Harris. By Charles Farrell, Joseph Fergus yngr, Farrells estate & the high road.	James Meade & Hugh Ryley Semper
24/04/1856	1	£13 10s	In trust for Charles Harris, wife Sarah & children. East of Bankers Range	William Thomas Greer & William Bramble
06/12/1856	1	£18	In trust for Peter Farrell, wife Frances & her children. Described as on "Negro Houses piece".	Charles Anstruther Chambers & Alexander Herbert
04/02/1858	3	£40 10s	Joseph Fergus jnr, planter. By JF's own land	
23/02/1858	2	£36	In trust for James Farrell, wife Emma & her children, & their any future children. By land of Joseph Fergus & Peter Farrell	Joseph Fergus yngr & James Foster Wheatland
25/02/1858	1	£18	Peter Farrell, labourer. By Lawrence Farrell, James Farrell & PF's own land	
25/02/1858	1	£18	Lawrence Farrell, labourer. By Peter Farrell	
27/02/1858	2	£36	Isaac White, labourer	
07/06/1859	1	£18	In trust for Henry Carty, wife Elizabeth & children. By road leading to Harris estate works	Matthew Dowdy Shiell & William Meade
16/01/1860	8	S£63	Bridge Piece 5 acres, by Caesar Bramble, John Lee, Mark Collins, Joe Osborn. Pasture Piece 3 acres, by Lydia & Charles Harris, James Chambers, William Browne, Fanny Luther. Yard & old estate works, by Quaco Irish, Joseph Fergus, Peter Farrell, William Burns.	George Winchester (n.b. S£ = sterling price paid)
16/01/1860	2	£27	Thomas Meade, labourer. By Jasper Meade, Pea gut & the high road.	
19/01/1860	1	£19 16s	Quaco Irish, labourer. By Isaac White trustee to Nanny Fergus.	
22/02/1860	2	£40	In trust for James Tousland Allen, Treasury Officer, mother Margaret, & her other children. By Lydia Harper & Charles Harris.	Julius Caesar Allen, merchant & Philip Ryley Semper, planter
22/02/1860	1	S£6	Henry Musgrave Furlonge. By James Osborn & George Winchester	
22/02/1860	1.5	S£9	Joseph Roach, labourer. In Garden Piece. By Edmond Fergus, Pinky Burke, Eve Ryan & Henry Carty.	

18/05/1860	1.25	£21 12s	In trust for Lydia Harper & her children. By high road & Mark Collins	George Barzey Wyke & George Wyke Dubery, schoolmaster
21/05/1860	1.75	£33 15s	In trust for William Burns, labourer, wife Matilda & children. “Little Island”. By the high road & road to the old works.	Thomas Greer, James Meade & Allen Irish, shopkeeper
23/11/1860	1	£13 10s	In trust for David West, wife Gertrude & children. By church, high road & Paradise estate	Alexander & William Frederick
23/11/1860	1.5	£27	In trust for Charels Farrell, labourer, Eleanor Buffong, spinster & any future lawful children they have. Land known as "Nolan". By Isaac White trustee to Nanny Fergus,& Eve Ryan, Mark Collins & Jimmy Meade	Christopher Skerrett, schoolmaster & James Tousland Allen, treasury officer
23/11/1860	1	£18	In trust for Priscilla Burke & children. By Joseph Roach, Eve Ryan & Henry Carty.	Henry William Dyett & Joseph Syres Meade
23/11/1860	2	S£12	In trust for Jasper Meade, labourer, wife Susanna & children. Little Island. By the high road, Paradise estate, William Tuitt, Pea gut & James Osborn.	Thomas Greer, planter & Henry Cox Greer, shoemaker
23/11/1860	1.5	£30	In trust for James Meade, labourer, wife Eliza & children. . By Sue Ryan, John Lee & Charles Farrell	John Samuel Meade Locker, carpenter
26/11/1860	2	£36	In trust for William Irish, labourer & sister Frances Ryan, widow and her grandson Mark Ryan. By William Browne, Jimmy Meade & Lydia Harper	Henry Irish Semper, shoemaker & James Tousland Allen, treasury officer

By this time JR Semper was recorded as married and “of Antigua”.

In January 1861, George Winchester, who had bought the 8 acres and the old estate works (above), put the 4 acres known as “Bridge Piece” in trust for Maria Meade, spinster, to then be inherited by his children and any future children of his by Maria. (Trustees William Bramble, schoolmaster & James Tousland Allen, Treasury Officer). Winchester also sold an acre in May 1862 to trustees William Farrell, schoolmaster and Charles Farrell, “freeholder”, for £14 17s in trust for Peter Farrell, wife Frances, her children and their future children; by Quaco Irish, Isaac White, Peter Farrell, Henry Carty and William Burns. In November 1861, Thomas Meade put his 2 acres (above) in trust for his wife Statia and their children; the trustee was Hugh Ryley Semper (HRS), descibed as “catechist”.

Another Semper, his relationship to John Rawlins Semper (JRS) is not clear. There appear to be two HRS in the record, though again the relationship of those two is unclear, as is whether the spelling of “Ryley” and “Riley”in the record is consistent or meaningful. To clarify, the Sempers need to be studied and analysed in a separate paper; the inter-relationships do not impact on the development of Harris.

In 1862 Hugh Ryley Semper bought the still substantial remains of Harris estate [24] at public auction by the Provost Marshal, for £136, in accordance with a court order at the suit of a George Davis, carpenter, against John Rawlins Semper in 1860 for just £75 6s [25]. But JRS had moved on; in 1863 he was appointed to the Executive Council of Antigua,[26] eventually became a Judge at the Supreme Court of the Leeward Islands, and died in London, England in 1904. HRS, also a barrister, eventually became Attorney General of Antigua, and later of Barbados.

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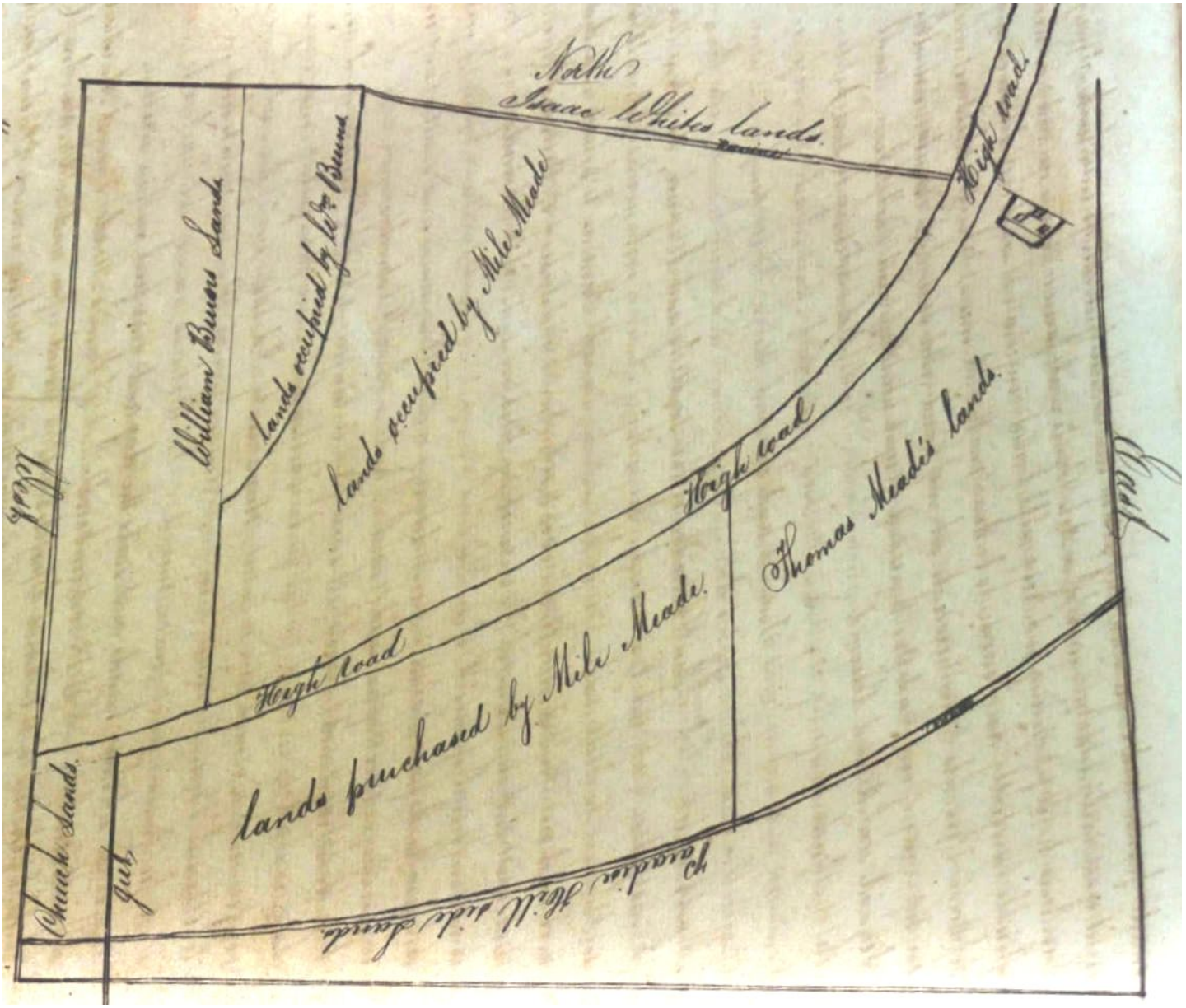
[24] ROD_MNI_1866_150
[25] Court of Queens Bench 1852 - 1867 in Montserrat Public Library - Image MPL_82_13_31
[26] Bulletins Compiled from the Official Documents Published in the London Gazette, Vol 1, 1863

He sold a couple of lots at Harris; half an acre to William Burns, labourer, to add to Burns' own plot recently purchased (above, in trust), next to Isaac White and Mile Meade; and also 4 acres to James Meade and William Bramble, trustees to Mile Meade, wife Mary and their children - some on the "Negro house lands" and some next to the glebe land of St Georges parish church, and next to James Meade. There is a diagram in the Montserrat National Trust archives illustrating this transaction. [27]



Sketch map of land sold from Harris estate 1862 - Image courtesy of the Montserrat National Trust

Meanwhile, some of the previous purchasers now started selling small lots of their own, growing the community. These transactions are summarised below.

Date	Vendor	Purchaser	Acres	Price	Beneficiaries &/or Neighbours
11/04/1863	George Winchester, planter	Thomas Harper, cooper & Edward Meade, planter	2	S£12	In trust for Thomas Tuitt, mason, children by deceased wife, present wife Emma & their children. By Farm estate, William Browne, Thomas Meade & James Chambers

[27] ROD_MNI_1866_219

13/11/1863	Joseph Fergus, planter & wife Mary	James Farrell, freeholder	2	C£40 10s	In trust for Charles Mulcare, wife Elizabeth & children. By Harris estate, Joseph Fergus & James Farrell
27/11/1863	Joseph Fergus, planter & wife Mary	Mark Collins, carpenter & Lewis L Loving, writing clerk	2	C£45	In trust for Cudjoe Lee, labourer, wife Matilda & children. Part of JF's land at Harris. High road to south, by road to old estate works.
27/11/1863	Joseph Fergus & wife Mary	WA Bramble, schoolmaster & Henry Osborne, labourer	2	C£45	In trust for William Michael Osborne, carpenter, wife Julia & children. By JF, Joseph Syers Meade & Farrills estate
30/11/1863	Joseph Fergus & wife Mary	Thomas L Weeks & John SM Locker	0.5	S£6	In trust for John Ryan, labourer, wife Elizabeth & children. Part of lands "Formerly known as Harris estate"
07/12/1863	Joseph Fergus & wife Mary	JT Allen, Treas.Off.	0.5	C£18	In trust for David Tuitt, labourer, wife Julia & children. By Peter Farrell, Macky Lee & high road
07/12/1863	Joseph Fergus & wife Mary	JT Allen, Treas.Off. & Allan Irish, shopkeeper	0.5	C£11 5s	In trust for Hector Farrell, wife Georgiana & children. West of Charles Mulcare & by JF

In May 1864 Edmund Fergus, described as “Domestic Servant, formerly of Montserrat”, had to pay 3s 6d at a public auction of the Provost Marshal to reclaim his 2 acres at Harris (and also 2s 10½d for his 2 acres in St Patrick parish by Morris estate, by the river at Lombard Bottom); the Land Tax overdue. This occurred quite frequently around the island, recent freeholders neglecting or unable to pay land taxes. It happened to Joseph Miles Osborne, labourer, later in 1864; 1s 2d to reclaim his acre at Harris.

And not just recent small freeholders; in the same month Harris estate itself was put up for auction for overdue land tax. Although “acquired” by “ Peter Irish, merchant, and Henry Dyett, esquire,” for £4 12s sterling, under the terms of the law an original owner was able within a grace period pay the overdue tax, with costs, and retain title; as demonstrated below by a later transaction recording HRS as owner still. This auction does describe Harris estate neighbours interestingly; “bounded to the east by lands formerly of John Chambers and formerly of Thomas Meade, to the west by Farrills Estate, to the north and north-west by lands formerly of Thomas Isles and the Bugby Hole river, and to the south by the high road and the lands formerly of Thomas Poulson”. Officialdom seemed unable to keep up with current ownerships, or perhaps old names of land owners just changed slowly in common parlance even with officials.

At the end of 1864 Harris estate did change ownership again; again at public auction by the Provost Marshal, but this time by court order (not found in the court records) at the suit of one EJ Smith of Montserrat against HRS. It was knocked down to John Francis Kirwan (of Waterwork plantation and other large estates, including Farm or Windward to the east of Harris) for £19 16s. This has all the indications of a preemptive move by HRS to dodge creditors, since in March 1866 HRS “of the Middle Temple London” [28], represented by his attorney John Rawlins Semper, became bound in the Montserrat court to Francis Shand, merchant of Liverpool for £600 sterling, and in the same month bound to Henry James Schooles, M.D., of Hythe, Kent, G.B., Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, in the penal sum of £10,000 sterling for an outstanding mortgage debt of £4,260 plus interest - a huge sum. An interesting fact here is that Schooles’ wife Catherine was a daughter of a Hugh Riley Semper of St Kitts; they married in 1843 while Schooles was stationed there as a British Army doctor. [29] Had Semper borrowed from a relative; were they his sister and brother in law, or cousins?

[28] The Middle Temple
[29] Schooles (n.b. typo on site shows Scholes) and here

Over the next decades, the following transactions are recorded; they give an insight into the residents of the village as it developed over this period. Kirwan is registered as also selling many small lots at Farm and Bethel. It is not shown in the National Trust records what happened to the remainder of Harris estate land.

Date	Vendor	Purchaser	Acres	Price	Beneficiaries &/or Neighbours
07/01/1865	James Tousland Allen, treasury officer	WA Bramble, schoolmaster & William Osborn, carpenter	1	£25 10s	In trust for Leah, wife of Nathaniel Parson, labourer, NP & children. By Lydia Harper West, JT Allen & Charles Harris, at the high road at the top of the hill.
21/02/1867	Joseph Fergus now of Trinidad, planter & wife Mary	Joseph Symes Meade & William Michael Osborn, carpenters	?All - have they sold up?	S£76	In trust for Hannah, wife of Edward Charles Meade (but not him) & their children. 1 lot by Cudjoe Lee, Charles Farrill, Charles Mulcare. Other small lot by Farrills estate, Hector Farrill, WM Osborn.
26/10/1867	Joseph Roach, labourer & wife Mary	WA Bramble, schoolmaster & WM Osborn, carpenter	0.33	£3 10s	In trust for Mary Ann White, widow of Richard Portland White & children. By JR, William Osborn, Henry Carty & Thomas Burke
10/03/1868	H Smith & JF Kirwan	WA Bramble, schoolmaster of Bethels & EC Meade, carpenter of Cartys	1		In trust for Quaco Simon White, wife Angelina & children. Part of Farm estate, at Terry Hill, by high road at Hixon Bottom to Harris' past Smoky Hill
15/08/1868	Joseph Roach & wife Mary, labourers	Peter Joseph Lee, tailor & WA Bramble, schoolmaster	144 sq ft	S£2 16s	In trust for William Henry Osborn, labourer, wife Matilda & children. At Harris's, part of JR's land. Bounds described.
17/02/1869	JF Kirwan & wife Emily	James Warner, carpenter & Joseph Roach, labourer	2 acres 3 roods & 22 perches	£1	In trust for widow Jane Brown & children. £1 owed at Harris for which Kirwans needed payment after acquiring estate ! The original purchase for £12 (£11 paid) was never registered.
19/04/1872	JF Kirwan & wife Emily	William Michael Osborne, millwright of Harris & Quamina Williams, carpenter of Cartys	1 rood & 27 perches	S£5	In trust for Samuel Isaac Lee, wife Ann Elizabeth. Bounded by Henry &James Osbornes, and Samuel Isaac Lee
14/05/1875	JF Kirwan & wife Emily	Henry Dyett, solicitor & WM Osborne, millwright of Harris	2	S£24	In trust for James Rodney, wife Ann & children. By Farrells estate, Harris estate, Edward Charles Meade, Georgina Trant
02/08/1875	JFKirwan & wife Emily	Quaminna Williams of Cartys, carpenter & WM Osborne of Harris, millwright	0.6	S£11	In trust for Peter Joseph Lee, wife Matilda & children “5½ tasks” (of 70 feet square each). By Anthony Dyer, Mrs Maria Chambers, widow, Grace Lee, Henry Harris

02/08/1875	JF Kirwan & wife Emily	William T Greer of Tuitts & Samuel Isaac Lee of Harris	0.45	S£8	In trust for Charles Barzey, wife Grace & children ."4 tasks of 70 feet square". North of the high road by William Charles Meade & William Osborne
02/08/1875	JF Kirwan & wife Emily	W M Osborne & Edward C Meade, carpenters	0.45	S£8	For William Charles Meade, wife Ann Jane Augusta & children. "4 tasks of land" . North & west of the high road, by William Osborne & Charles Barzey
27/04/1876	JF Kirwan & wife Emily	John HT Wilkin of Harris	0.23	S£4	2 tasks of 70 feet square each.By William D Cooper, Isaac Tuitt, Lawrence Farrell
24/04/1878	J F Kirwan & wife Emily	William Michael Osborne, carpenter & Peter Joseph Lee, tailor	0.23	£4	for Joseph Michael Osborne, tailor, wife Susannah Henrietta & children. 2 tasks of 70 ft sq. By Richard Samuel & Grace Lee
15/04/1879	John T Lynch, labourer & wife Ann	William Henry Osborne, labourer & wife Matilda	1	£8	By William Meade, JTL & William Riley
25/04/1884	Gabriel Molter Harper, tailor	James Meade Loving & Joseph Allen, merchants	1	£34	Iin trust for Michael Thomas Meade, planter, wife Catherine & children. At Mount Pleasant in Harris, by Edward Harris, Leah Parsons, Henry Boatswain, Thomas Farrell, Mark Collins & Abraham Meade
22/01/1889	King Pitman Pencheon, merchant	George Henry Beach, butcher	2	£80	plus debt of £125 owing to KPP from Isaac White on the property mortgaged 13/12/75. At Harris
07/09/1896	Provost Marshal	Julia Dyer		3s 7d	"Julia Dyer's" at Harris Village, by Mrs Lee, Mrs Amy Farrell, Mrs Phillis Farrell & Joseph Lee
24/01/1898	Joseph Roach & wife Mary	John Thomas Wilkin	70' x 70' - a “task”	S£3	In trust for Bridget Cooper, labourer & her son William Cooper. At Harris Village by William Wade & JR
05/03/1900	George Henry Beach	FH Watkins, Commisioner		£25	Mortgage bond - Govt loan for repairs to GHB property named “Surprise” - 1899 hurricane
27/07/1900	James R G Osborne, lessee	FH Watkins, Commisioner		£50	Leased from The Montserrat Co.Ltd, estate buildings destroyed by 1899 hurricane. JRGO owns 1/3 of 2 acres at Harris
02/03/1901	George Henry Beach. “master butcher of Harris”	FH Watkins, Commisioner		£25	Mortgage bond - Govt loan for repairs to GHB property named “Surprise” - 1899 hurricane
06/09/1901	Mary Ann Farrell & Rosanna Jeffers, both of St George parish	FH Watkins, Commisioner		£50	Harris Police Station, previously leased, west of The Rectory & north of the high road

02/07/1903	Cornelius Syers Meade	FH Watkins, Commisioner	2	£2 10s p.a.	At end of this 3 year lease, another 10 year lease. Harris Village, bounded by Farrells estate, William Osborne house across a small gut, and being adjacent to the Police Station.

The Registrar's records are not digitised, nor with the National Trust, beyond this date.

There is the occasional mention of Harris elswhere up to the First World War.

On the Windward side of the island, Mr. Kortright has traced a new road, with a good gradient from Pea Gut to Harris' Village, and this is now being opened up for relief labour. This road should prove of the utmost value, the gradient of the present road being too steep for the cartage of sugar.

The new roads at Harris' Hill, and from Streatham's to Waterworks, are progressing satisfactorily, and the laying of the water-pipes for the water supply to Harris' Village will at once be commenced as a further relief work, with the sanction of the Secretary of State. I would here point out, however, that while the laying of the piping (about 600 yards), which we already possess, will be done by relief labour, as approved by the Secretary of State, there will necessarily be some expenditure for the further piping to complete the work. I have requested Mr. Kortright to furnish an estimate of the piping required, which should be sent for as soon as possible.

1899 Government Hurricane Report

To windward a large reservoir containing 80,000 gallons was constructed, which will serve as storage for the Harris' Waterworks.

The police station at Harris' Village, for which a rental of £14 was being paid, was purchased for £50. Extensive repairs are necessary, but the purchase will mean ultimate economy.

1901-2 Leeward Islands Annual Report

Among the public works carried out during the year were the following:—

(1.) Harris Road was completed, thus giving to the Windward district a driving road of easy gradient to town.

(2.) Trant's Bridge was practically rebuilt.

(3.) An operating room was added to the hospital.

(4.) Between two and three acres were purchased, enclosed, and laid out as a public cemetery for Harris Village.

1903-4 Leeward Islands Annual Report

Agricultural Shows.

Shows of agricultural produce are now held annually in each Presidency, under the auspices of the Imperial Department of Agriculture and the local agricultural societies, at which prizes are awarded for the best exhibits of agricultural produce in a large number of classes. The Shows are having a marked effect in improving the quality of produce.

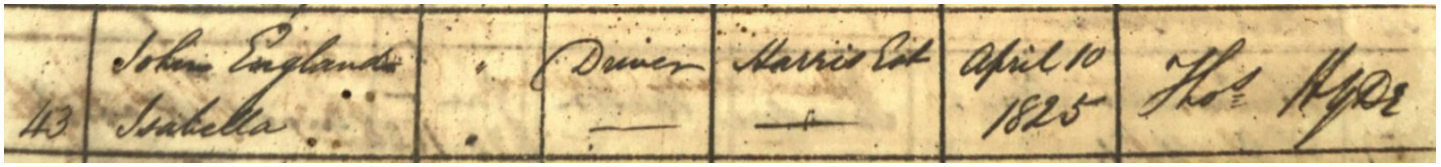
The following Shows have recently been held:—

Tortola	October 24th, 1906.
Montserrat	November 9th, 1906.
Harris Village	
Antigua	February 28th, 1907.
St. Kitts	March 11th, 1907.
Nevis	April 4th, 1907.

1906-7 Leeward Islands Annual Report

The Village Smithy - Harris Village 1914 - Sturge Collection - courtesy of Montserrat National Trust

Some other snippets from the archives

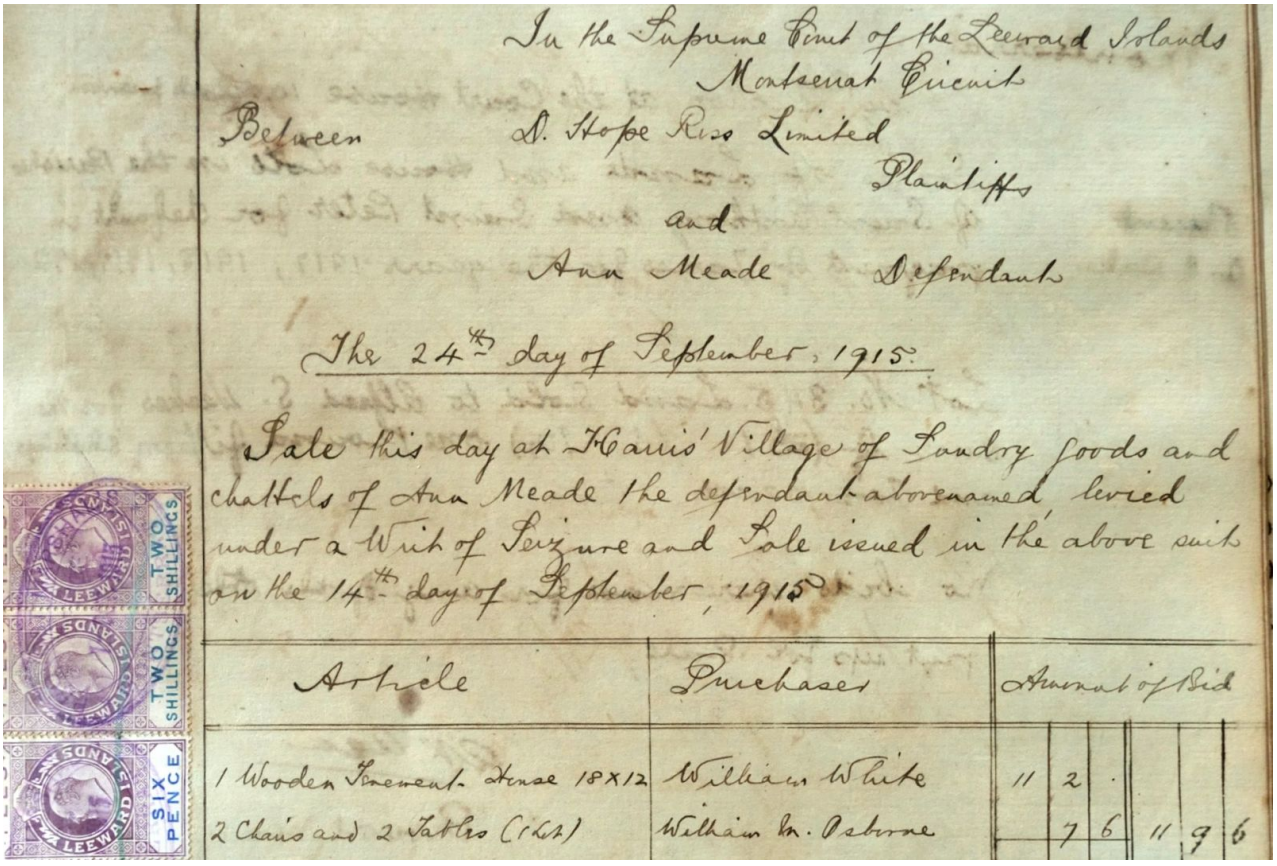


43	John England Isabella		Driver —	Harris Est —	April 10 1825	Thos Hyde

A marriage recorded between 2 enslaved persons of Harris estate - not recognised as a legal union until a law passed in 1839. **From A Record of Wesleyan marriages 1820 - 1840 at the Montserrat National Trust**

224	Robert Gilbert Born 2 May 1850	Patrick Boatswain and Martha his wife	Carpenter		July 4 1850	Harris	Robert Gilbert

1850 Wesleyan baptism of Robert G Boatswain of Harris **From digital records at the Montserrat National Trust**



In the Supreme Court of the Leeward Islands
Montserrat Circuit

Between S. Hope Ross Limited Plaintiffs
and
Ann Meade Defendant

The 24th day of September, 1915.

Sale this day at Harris' Village of Laundry goods and chattels of Ann Meade the defendant abovenamed levied under a Writ of Seizure and Sale issued in the above suit on the 14th day of September, 1915.

Article	Purchaser	Amount of Bid
1 Wooden Tenement House 18x12	William White	11 2 .
2 Chairs and 2 Tables (old)	William M. Osborne	7 6
		11 9 6

Ann Meade's house sold at auction 1915 to pay debts. Image courtesy of Montserrat National Trust

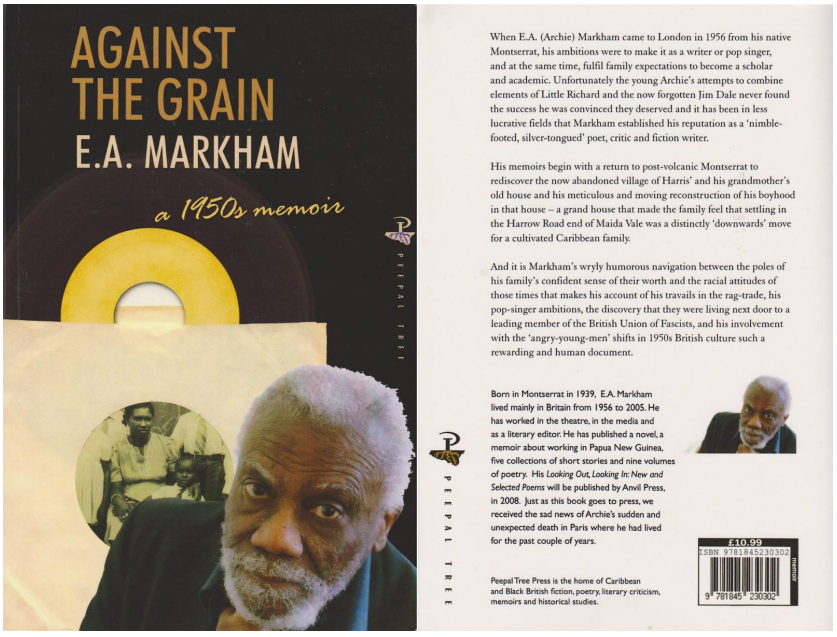
Interior of St. George's Church.

when day began to break. After the storm Harris' the largest village in the island, according to the opinion of an old soldier, presented the appearance of a Flanders' Village after a terrible bombardment.

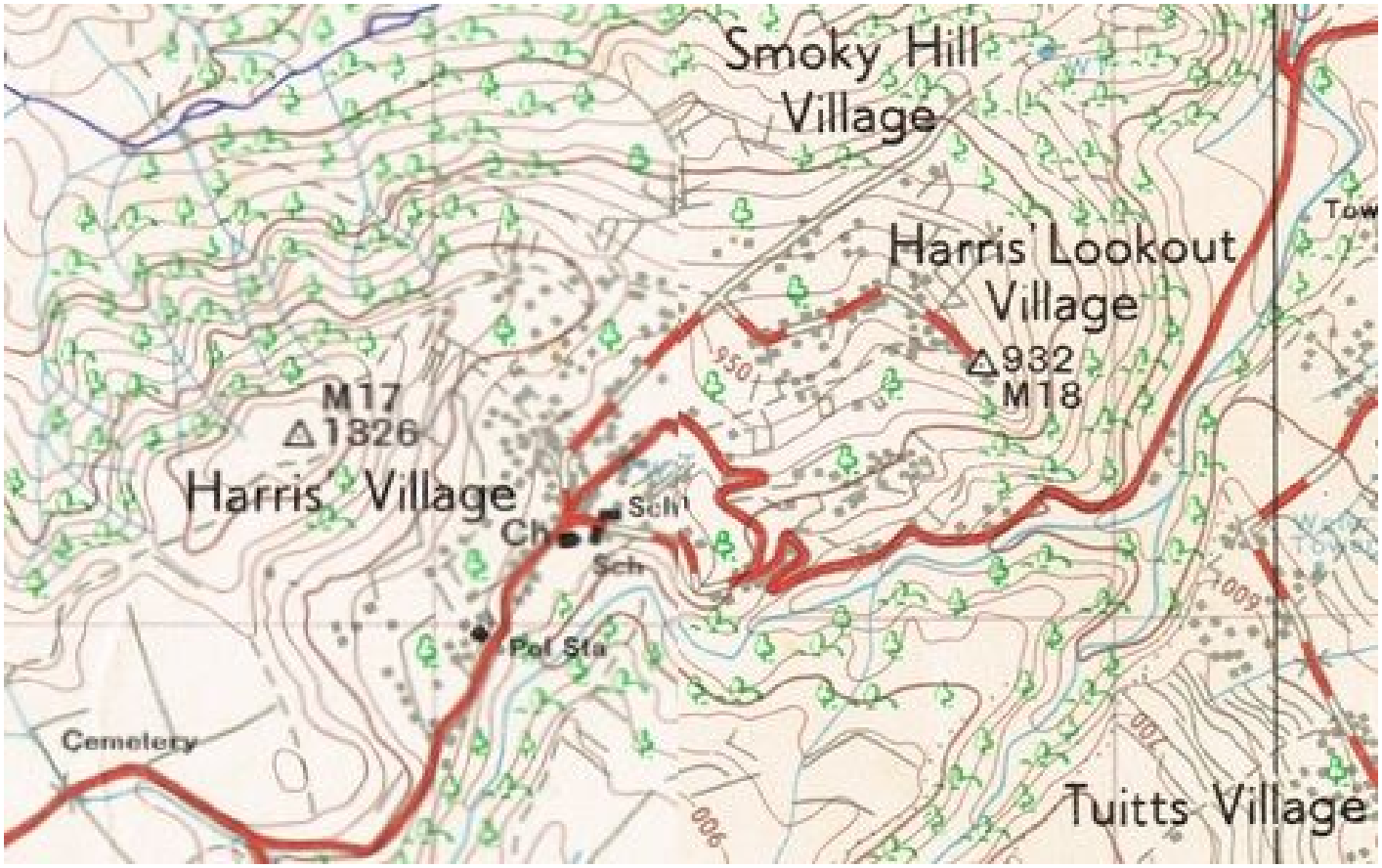
Photo and text from F.E. Peters' book "Montserrat: A Souvenir of the Great Hurricane of September 12-13 1928"

According to Peters, the church (first built in ca.1838) was badly damaged in the earthquake of 1843, destroyed in the hurricane of 1899, slightly damaged in the hurricane of 1924, and badly damaged in the hurricane of 1928. Then there were serious earthquakes in Montserrat in the 1930s.

Ruins of St. George's Church at Harris Village. After having been badly damaged on December 12, 1934, the church was repaired and then was damaged further on May 6, 1935, and in November of the same year.


AGAINST
THE GRAIN
E.A. MARKHAM
a 1950s memoir
PEEPAL TREE
When E.A. (Archie) Markham came to London in 1956 from his native Montserrat, his ambitions were to make it as a writer or pop singer, and at the same time, fulfil family expectations to become a scholar and academic. Unfortunately the young Archie's attempts to combine elements of Little Richard and the now forgotten Jim Dale never found the success he was convinced they deserved and it has been in less lucrative fields that Markham established his reputation as a 'nimble-footed, silver-tongued' poet, critic and fiction writer.
His memoirs begin with a return to post-volcanic Montserrat to rediscover the now abandoned village of Harris' and his grandmother's old house and his meticulous and moving reconstruction of his boyhood in that house – a grand house that made the family feel that settling in the Harrow Road end of Maida Vale was a distinctly 'downwards' move for a cultivated Caribbean family.
And it is Markham's wryly humorous navigation between the poles of his family's confident sense of their worth and the racial attitudes of those times that makes his account of his travails in the rag-trade, his pop-singer ambitions, the discovery that they were living next door to a leading member of the British Union of Fascists, and his involvement with the 'angry-young-men' shifts in 1950s British culture such a rewarding and human document.
Born in Montserrat in 1939, E.A. Markham lived mainly in Britain from 1956 to 2005. He has worked in the theatre, in the media and as a literary editor. He has published a novel, a memoir about working in Papua New Guinea, five collections of short stories and nine volumes of poetry. His Looking Out, Looking In: New and Selected Poems will be published by Anvil Press, in 2008. Just as this book goes to press, we received the sad news of Archie's sudden and unexpected death in Paris where he had lived for the past couple of years.
Peepal Tree Press is the home of Caribbean and Black British fiction, poetry, literary criticism, memoirs and historical studies.
£10.99
ISBN 9781845230302
9 781845 230302

There are some memories of growing up in Harris village in the 1940s and '50s in this - of Teacher Morgan, and the Markham, Lee and Osborne families - and *"a black mango tree - originally they say it come down from Windy Hill"*



Extract from 1965 map of Montserrat

Map of Montserrat - from 1909, Colonial Office - London